**Notes on Matthew 8:18-27**

* Vv. 18-22
  + “Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. 19 And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 20 And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 21 And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 22 But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.”
    - This account opens with Jesus being thronged by a crowd. It is an example of Luke’s words; “Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.” Jesus had performed miracles—and many people were desperate to see it for themselves. But Jesus didn’t come to this world to entertain. He wasn’t concerned with fame. This account shows that very clearly. In the midst of a vast crowd, Jesus decided to leave. He commanded His disciples to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee.
    - Can you picture it? This crowd had gathered to see Jesus. Many of them had probably travelled a long way—but now Jesus was leaving. In our day and age, we are accustomed to seeing crowds throng celebrities or politicians. Body guards have to clear the way in order for them to make it to their car. People push and shove, trying to get close to them. That’s what I think it was like in this account. There was such a stir that Jesus told His disciples, “Let’s go.”
    - As Jesus was trying to get to the boat, a scribe in the crowd told Him; “Master, I will follow thee withersoever thou goest.” On the surface, that seems like a commendable attitude. If it were true, then it certainly would have been—but Jesus knew this scribe’s heart. Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” It might appear that this man’s problem was his love of comfort. However, I believe that was just the surface issue—the red flag that revealed his heart. There are two main reasons why I think this. First, the scribe called Jesus “Master.” This is a word which refers to a teacher or instructor (Strong’s). If you do a quick study on this word, you will realize that it was the primary title that the lost used when addressing or referring to Jesus. For instance, in Matthew 9:11 it says, “And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your **Master** with publicans and sinners?” Matthew 12:38 says, “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, **Master**, we would see a sign from thee.” Matthew 22:15-17 says, “Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. 16 And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, **Master**, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. 17 Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?” Of the forty-eight times that this word is used in the Gospels, it is almost always used in this way (by a lost person as a title for Jesus). This title was the most common way to refer to a Jewish religious teacher. This scribe believed that Jesus was the next great Jewish teacher—but I doubt that he believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Notice what Jesus called Himself—“The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the **Son of man** hath not where to lay his head.” This goes back to Daniel 7:13-14 which says, “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Clearly, this is a reference to the Messiah—and this scribe certainly would have known that. Do you see how this puts the whole incident into a new light? As Jesus was heading to the boat, the scribe said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” And Jesus responded, “Are you sure? I’m the Messiah, and I don’t even have a home.” This would have assaulted the scribe’s understanding about the Messiah. The Messiah wasn’t supposed to sleep outside! He was supposed to rule. He was supposed to fight. He was supposed to live in a palace. But Jesus didn’t fit into this man’s mold. He wasn’t just “the next great teacher”—but He also wasn’t the conquering Messiah that they all expected. If this scribe wanted to follow Jesus, he needed to let go of all of His preconceived ideas and simply trust in Jesus. We can’t be certain of what this man did, but from what the text says, I doubt that whole-heartedly trusting in Jesus as the Messiah was a decision that He was ready to make.
    - The next individual we are introduced to in this passage forms a contrast to the scribe. As Jesus was trying to get to the boat, one of Jesus’ own disciples said to Him, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” While the scribe thought he was ready to follow Jesus, this disciple was already following Jesus, yet wanted to go back home. Within their culture, this man’s request wasn’t surprising or unusual. Burial of an individual’s parent was considered to be an essential responsibility. After a parent (or anyone) passed away, the body was to be buried as soon as possible. The burial marked the beginning of a seven-day period of mourning. The immediate family was expected to stay in their home during that period of time apart from visiting the tomb (John 11:31). Once the seven days were over, their normal life could resume. However, in the case of a deceased parent, their children were expected to mourn them for an entire year. The reason for this revolved around Jewish burial practices. According to Jewish custom, a person was actually buried twice. The first burial would take place as soon as they had died. Their body would be placed in an open area within the family tomb. Over the course of a year, their bodies would completely decompose, leaving only their skeleton behind. After that year had passed, the family would go in and move their bones to a permanent resting place within the tomb. If the deceased person was your parent, you were expected to stay in mourning for that entire period of time. Travelling all over Israel would certainly have been considered disrespectful during this period of mourning. Now that you know the culture, you can understand why this man requested to go home, but you can also understand why Jesus said no. Luke 9 seems to imply that this event took place near the end of Jesus ministry. When this man asked Jesus to go home to bury his father, he wasn’t talking about taking an afternoon off. He was talking about being gone for at least a year (if his father had just passed away). If this man actually did go home at this point, then it’s likely that he missed everything (Jesus crucifixion, His resurrection, the beginning of the church, etc.) No wonder Jesus said, “Follow me.”
    - Many people have puzzled at Jesus’ comment; “Let the dead bury their dead.” In my opinion, there are two possible interpretations of this comment. Remember how the Jews would bury a person twice? When this disciple said, “Suffer me first to go and bury my father,” he could have been talking about the second burial. In that case, his father was already buried, and he was asking permission to go back and move his father’s bones to another part of the family tomb. If this was true, then the sense of Jesus’ words would have been, “He’s already with the dead, so leave him there. Let them take care of his bones.” From Jesus’ perspective, burying a person a second time probably seemed silly. It was just a few bones. The person’s soul wasn’t there anymore. If their bones were already “sleeping with their father’s,” couldn’t they just be left alone? However, Jesus could also have been referring to those who were spiritually dead by “the dead.” In other words, “Let those who are spiritually dead bury the dead,”—“Let the lost take care of burying the dead. You follow me.” Honestly, I’m not sure which I think is more probable. Either “the dead” is referring to the other skeletons inside the family tomb, or “the dead” is referring to the man’s lost family members that were still living. Either way, the point was the same—“Following me should be your priority.” Burying his father wasn’t a bad thing, but it paled in comparison to following Jesus. The Messiah was right in front of Him—and that should have taken precedence over anything else.
* Vv. 23-27
  + “And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. 25 And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. 26 And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. 27 But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”
    - Jesus and His disciples were finally able to disentangle themselves from the crowd and get aboard the ship. Well into the evening, they started the roughly seven-mile trip from Capernaum to the “country of the Gergesenes,” (directly across the lake from west to east). What transpired next was both a touching example of Jesus’ humanity and a powerful demonstration of his divinity. As they travelled across the Sea of Galilee, “there arose a great tempest in the sea.” Mark 4 says, “there arose a great storm of wind.” Because the Sea of Galilee is less than 150 feet deep at its deepest point, it is easily agitated. It doesn’t have the ability to absorb wind the way deeper bodies of water can. Combine that with the fact that it is part of the Jordan Rift Valley (a natural wind tunnel), and you have a storm factory. With almost no warning, storms can form—and that’s exactly what happened. This particular storm was so powerful that their boat began to fill with water. Mark 4 tells us, “and there were also with Him other little ships.” This tells us two things. First, Jesus was in a small boat. Second, He wasn’t alone. Some of the crowd had doubtless decided to follow Jesus across the Sea of Galilee. Because of this storm, they were all in danger (or so it seemed). Where was Jesus in all of this? He was asleep. Few accounts in the Gospels demonstrate Jesus humanity more clearly than this one does. After a grueling day of teaching, healing, and travelling, Jesus was tired. In fact, He was so tired that the storm didn’t wake Him.
    - When all hope was gone, Jesus disciples came to Jesus and said, “Lord, save us: we perish.” Mark 4 records that they said, “Master, carest thou not that we perish?” Jesus’ disciples were obviously bothered that Jesus hadn’t done anything about the situation. They even doubted His concern for them. As I was reading this, I was reminded of what the children of Israel said at the Red Sea; “Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?” Like Jesus’ disciples, they doubted God’s intentions.
    - Jesus didn’t beat around the bush with His response; “Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?” From Jesus’ perspective, their response was unreasonable. They were afraid. They doubted Him—but they shouldn’t have. This whole section started with “Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He **gave commandment** to depart unto the other side.” Jesus had specifically told them to go to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Wouldn’t He make sure that happened? This reveals an important principle for all of us: Where God guides, He provides. It is unreasonable to expect any less.
    - Don’t misunderstand Jesus’ comment about “little faith.” “Little faith is just a figure of speech that describes a person not trusting in God when they have every reason to do so. At any given moment, a person is either trusting in God, or they are not. There’s no middle ground. I’ll prove it to you. Over in Mark 4, concerning this same incident Mark records that Jesus said, “how is it that ye have **no faith**?” Luke records the comment as “Where is your faith?” “Little faith” is the same as having no faith. It is refusing to trust in God when you have every reason to do so. Jesus disciples had watched Jesus perform countless miracles. They had seen Jesus perform miracles earlier that same day! Yet, they were afraid. They doubted Him. In this instance, they didn’t trust in Jesus. This is what Jesus meant by “little faith.”
    - Even though they had doubted Him, Jesus still kept His word. He told them to go to the other side, and that’s where they were going to go. “Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.” The word “rebuked” carries the idea of restraining something or someone. The same word is used in Matthew 19:13 when Jesus’ disciples “rebuked” the people who brought their “little children” to Jesus. You can see the idea of restraint there. The disciples tried to restrain the parents from bringing their children to Jesus—but Jesus didn’t just “try” to restrain this storm. He had the authority to do so, and He excised that authority. V. 27 says, “But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” What a beautiful picture of Jesus’ humanity and divinity. Exhausted, the storm didn’t wake Him—but it was within His control the whole time. A paradox? Yes—but a paradox within reality.